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ABSTRACT

Placing the debate in the United States over amending the Constitution to permit state-sanctioned school prayer in global perspective, this report analyzes the results of a survey of the school prayer policies of 72 countries. The report concludes that the vast majority of the major countries of the world, including Western Europe, Central America, and Asia, have rejected state-sanctioned prayer in their public school systems. Specifically, 70 countries have unified national policies concerning prayer, religious observance, and religious instruction in public schools. Of the 70, 11 countries (15.7%) have state-sanctioned school prayer periods in their schools in which children recite a single prayer together. Eight of the 11 are nations whose religious demographics are for more homogeneous than the United States. Several nations pointedly reject a national policy for such a system including Italy, Israel, and Iran. The report also summarizes the history of the separation of church and state in the United States. It argues that the Founders recognized that for religion to flourish here as they intended, the state would have to stay out of it. Imposing a constitutional amendment designating state-sanctioned prayer periods in the public schools, the report states, would in effect repeal the First Amendment, denigrate and eviscerate its history, and transform the public schools into arenas of religious rivalry. Detailed country-by-country results of this survey are presented in the attached addendum. (LH)

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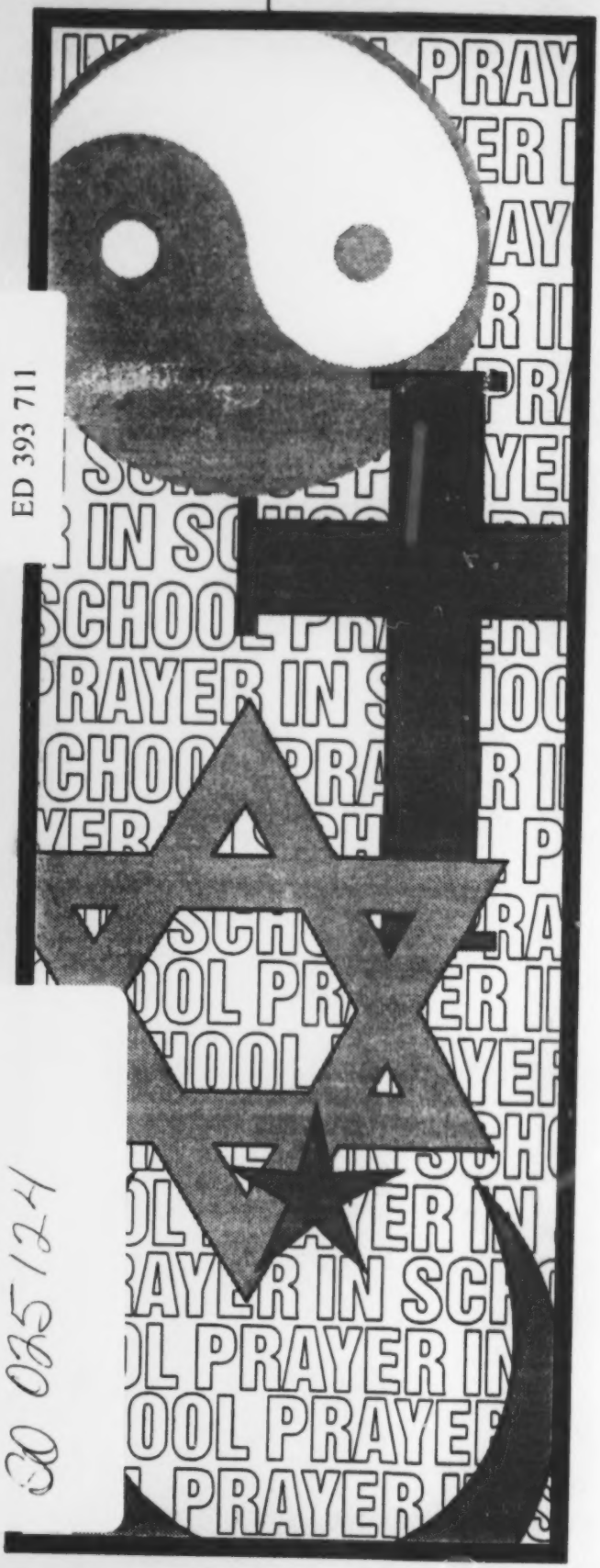

Prayer in School

An International Survey

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A Report by the
AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

May 1995

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> The place of religion in our society is an exalted one, achieved through a long tradition of reliance on the home, the church and the inviolable citadel of the individual heart and mind. We have come to recognize through bitter experience that it is not within the power of government to invade that citadel, whether its purpose or effect be to aid or oppose, to advance or retard. In the relationship between man and religion, the State is firmly committed to a position of neutrality.
>
> **U.S. Supreme Court Justice Tom C. Clark,**
> **writing for the majority in *School District of Abington Township v. Schempp*[1]**

In late November, 1994, the incoming Republican leadership of Congress announced a plan to introduce a constitutional amendment permitting state-sanctioned prayer periods in public schools throughout the United States. Although such an amendment had been introduced in the House of Representatives a month before by U.S. Rep. Ernest J. Istook (R-Okla.), the Republican leadership later indicated that the prayer amendment planned for 1995 would differ from Rep. Istook's proposal. Rep. Istook was designated to head the Republican task force on a prayer amendment.

Nevertheless, the leadership said in late November that the tactic of amending the Constitution was necessary and would go forward because existing court decisions and the Constitution and Bill of Rights themselves clearly prohibit state-sanctioned prayer in schools. The leadership also was not satisfied with pursuing legislative initiatives for a moment of silence at the start of the school day because such a provision would not be *per se* an express authorization for organized group prayer in which all students would be expected to participate, even though the Republican proposal would not "compel" participation.[2]

The Republican proposal also said that government "should not mandate the words of a prayer,"[3] but stopped short of saying that school authorities could not dictate which previously composed prayers could be said and which could not, or what religions could—and could not—be represented among prayers chosen for recitation in schools.

These developments have been very much consistent with previous U.S. school prayer debates. It is clear that there will probably always be pressure from certain political or religious factions in this country for adoption of policies that, directly or indirectly, force children to pray in school and to recite only those prayers approved by the dominant religion within a particular school or school district.

The controversy ignores an important distinction honored by the Constitution: While the State is prohibited from imposing any particular religion and the schools may not act as religious agents by sponsoring religious activities, American public education is—and always has been—free to teach children and young people *about* religion and religion's role in this and other societies.[4]

By April, 1995, the Republican proposal had evolved further, with a variety of GOP and conservative religious groups working to draft different versions of a "Religious Equality Amendment" to the Constitution.[5] Wording of the proposed amendment was closely held and potential sponsors speculated that legislation might be introduced in Congress in May, 1995.

Some analysts suggested that the Republican strategy may have been altered to avoid what would certainly be a divisive national debate on an amendment addressing school prayer in isolation by adding to it a variety of other issues pertaining to religious expression. However, some conservative observers asserted that school prayer would be a specific focus of such legislation.

The Republican strategy to cloud the issue has not been successful. In late April, 1995, a leading newspaper attacked the finessed GOP proposal. The editorial argued that:

> With the first 100 days out of the way, social revolutionaries of the right in Congress are pressing for enactment of their deferred social agenda, especially the political prize of school prayer. They want to weaken and circumvent the First Amendment, which the Supreme Court rightly has held to forbid government-sponsored devotional expression as a coercive intrusion on individual beliefs. The aim is a radical reduction in the religious liberty Americans have long known
>
> All Americans, in school or wherever they may be, are free now to pray by themselves and express their faith. There is no need to bring officially sanctioned prayer back to schools or to lower other barriers that separate church and state.[6]

The debate over amending the Constitution to permit state-sponsored school prayer also ignores a great deal of what made the United States unique when the Founders debated the concepts that ultimately were codified in the Constitution and Bill of Rights in the late 18th Century. As James Madison observed:

> The Religion then of every man must be left to the conviction and conscience of every man; and it is the right of every man to exercise it as these may dictate. This right is in its nature an inalienable right.[7]

And Madison was far from alone. Thomas Jefferson, among others, insisted on "building a wall of separation between church and state" in an 1802 letter to the Danbury Baptist Association in which Jefferson expanded on the purpose of the First Amendment.[8]

As a concept, separation of church and state has Biblical roots: "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesars, and to God the things that are God's."[9] In 1644, Roger Williams, the great Baptist leader who founded Rhode Island as a colony of tolerance after he was banished from Massachusetts for "new and dangerous opinions"[10] on religion, found support in both the Old and New Testaments for the proposition that the kingdom of God cannot be found on Earth and could only be corrupted by the intermingling of church and state. Thus, he concluded that there must be a "hedge or *wall of separation* between the garden of the church and the wilderness of the world."[11]

Benjamin Franklin expressed a view common among the architects of the American dream:

> When a religion is good, I conceive that it will support itself; and, when it cannot support itself, and God does not take care to support it, so that its professors are obliged to call for the help of the civil power, it is a sign, I apprehend, of its being a bad one.[12]

These founders recognized the historical reality that many of the first English and European settlers in North America had come here expressly to escape from governmental systems, like that of England, in which adherence to specified Christian sects was required for full participation in the society and persecution of those not favored was rampant. Thus, to impose a constitutional amendment designating state-sanctioned prayer periods in the public schools is to, in effect, *repeal* the First Amendment, denigrate and eviscerate its history and transform the public schools into arenas of religious rivalry.

It is an issue to which the Supreme Court has long been sensitive. As the court observed in the seminal school prayer case, *Engel v. Vitale*, decided in 1962:

> It is a matter of history that this very practice of establishing governmentally composed prayers for religious services was one of the reasons which caused many of our early colonists to leave England and seek religious freedom in America....
>
> By the time of the adoption of the Constitution, our history shows that there was a widespread awareness among many Americans of the dangers of a union of Church and State. These people knew, some of them from bitter personal experience, that one of the greatest dangers to the freedom of the individual to worship in his own way lay in the Government's placing its official stamp of approval upon one particular kind of prayer or one particular form of religious services. They knew the anguish, hardship and bitter strife that could come when zealous religious groups struggled with one another to obtain the Government's stamp of approval....[13]

Historically, some of the most prominent observers of the American scene have concluded that the pains to which this country goes to maintain a wall between church and state not only preserve the integrity of the democracy, but strengthen the influence of religion across our society. Alexis de Tocqueville, describing his own reaction to the American insistence on keeping religion out of government in the 12th edition of *Democracy In America* in 1848, for instance, observed:

> As a practicing Catholic, I was particularly close to the Catholic priests, with some of whom I soon established a certain intimacy. I expressed my astonishment and revealed my doubts to each of them; I found that they all agreed with each other except about details; all thought that the main reason for the quiet sway of religion over their country was the complete separation of church and state. I have no hesitation in stating that throughout my stay in America, I met nobody, lay or cleric, who did not agree with that.
>
> When a nation adopts a democratic social state and communities show republican inclinations, it becomes increasingly dangerous for religion to ally itself with authority.
>
> The American clergy were the first to perceive this truth and to act in conformity with it. They saw that they would have to give up religious influence if they wanted to acquire political power and they chose to lose the support of authority than to share its vicissitudes.[14]

The Founders were confident that a society in which church and state were separated would, over time, benefit religion far more than it would be harmed. Time has validated this concept. Although the United States maintains one of the most rigorous separations between government and religion, surveys and other analyses of the religious fervor and beliefs of Americans have found that religion thrives in this country perhaps as nowhere else. Consistently, Americans have recorded far higher proportions of respondents saying they believe in God, think religion is very important and believe in life after death than countries where church-state barriers are not as jealously protected.[15] Americans respond in the affirmative to such questions far more often than Italians, Canadians, Belgians, Australians, the Dutch, the British, the French, Swedes, Danes and Norwegians.

Moreover, an overwhelming majority of Americans—86.2 percent—consider themselves Christians and just 2.3 percent of Americans decline to identify any religious affiliation.[16]

As one recent analysis of the relationship between this overwhelming religious sentiment and the separation of church and state in this country concluded:

> The United States, with its separation of church and state, has in religious surveys conducted over many years consistently scored higher as to belief than other democratic nations. Furthermore, the Gallup results indicated that religious beliefs are lower in advanced industrial democratic nations, except the United States, which went against the overall trend.[17]

The reflections of Tocqueville aside, because U.S. history and society are so unique, it might seem logical to expect that this country would be somehow alone in its insistence on retaining a rigid line between state-sanctioned religious observance and public education. What has not been addressed in this American debate, however, is the degree to which such an amendment to the U.S. Constitution would—or would *not*—compare with the policies over prayer in school that prevail in other countries in the world. Because the school prayer practices of other countries may be instructive for U.S. policymakers, the American Civil Liberties Union of Southern California organized an international survey of how dozens of nations handle the relationship between publicly funded education and religious observance. Between early December, 1994, and early January, 1995, a survey team was assembled by the ACLU of Southern California; the ACLU national office in New York City, and the New York headquarters office of Human Rights Watch. This team initiated contacts with more than 100 countries through their consulates in Los Angeles, their embassies in Washington and their United Nations missions in New York—in some cases through two or all three of such offices.

Survey workers utilized a standardized instrument, employed in letter and telephone questionnaire form. The instrument asked whether the country:

1 ..... Has an expressly government-authorized prayer period in which children recite a single prayer together. The instrument also asked how the prayer was chosen.

2 ..... Requires participation in any public school prayer activity.

3 ..... Offers religious instruction in public schools, as well as whether schools offer instruction *about* religion. The instrument asked if such instruction is voluntary or mandatory and whether, if it is mandatory, parents may withdraw their children from such classes.

4 ..... What the style or focus of the religious instruction is, specifically whether it is multi-faith in nature and intended to expose students to the broad influences and roles of religion in society or whether it was single-faith, intended to inculcate the teachings of a particular religion.

A total of 72 countries ultimately responded to the survey, including Canada, where it was necessary to poll the individual provinces because there is no uniform national policy. The respondent countries represent a cross section of every continent, with special focus on Eastern and Western Europe, Asia, the Middle East and Central America.

Detailed country-by-country results of this survey are presented in "Prayer in School: An International Survey," an addendum to this paper. We examine these overall results in further detail here.

Of the 72 countries in question, 70 have unified national policies concerning prayer, religious observance and religious instruction in public schools. Of those 70, 11 countries (15.7%) have state-sanctioned school prayer periods in their schools in which children recite a single prayer together. Although this is a small proportion of the countries surveyed, eight of the 11 (72.7) countries are nations whose religious demographics are far more homogenous than the United States. In one country (Colombia), the government has enacted stricter separation of church and state under which school prayer is to be abandoned, but the government has been unable to fully implement this policy change. The situation remains fluid.

Only two of the 70 countries (2.9%) with unified school prayer policies currently have state-mandated prayer similar to that envisioned by the Republican leadership.

Religiously homogenous countries with school prayer are dominantly Finland, Greece, Libya, Nepal, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Romania and Thailand. In Saudi Arabia, Islam is the official state religion.

In Canada, two of eight provinces surveyed (the Alberta provincial government declined to respond) provide for collective prayer in schools. The two provinces that provide for school prayer do not include any of Canada's most diverse, urbanized areas. Saskatchewan allows as much as 2 1/2 hours of religious instruction a week and stipulates that the Lord's Prayer or a suitable Bible reading is appropriate for the classroom. Newfoundland has both Roman Catholic and non-Catholic schools operating under government sanction; although Newfoundland has a policy of collective prayer in schools, a morning prayer service and religious education are both optional.

One of the 11 countries, Colombia, revised its constitution in 1991 and adopted a strict separation of church and state, even though Colombia is an overwhelmingly Roman Catholic nation. However, implementation of this new constitutional provision has met internal political resistance and many Colombian public schools still have state-sanctioned prayer periods. Masses are said weekly in Colombian public schools, although children may opt for nonsectarian religion classes and are not required to participate in Mass.

The situation is Colombia is balanced by the situation in Ecuador, where the government is introducing a policy in which religion will be taught in public schools, although the schools are secular for the moment. The internal political debate over this issue last year prompted the resignation of Ecuador's minister of education.

Several nations in which required prayer might be expected to be the national policy pointedly reject such a system. They include:

> **Italy**, where although there is no prayer period, there is one hour of optional religious instruction per week. Such classes are scheduled at the beginning or end of the school day to make it convenient for students or families that choose not to participate.
>
> **Israel**, where mandatory prayer is not present in non-Orthodox schools, which most closely fit the U.S. definition of public schools. Because the country is 82 percent Jewish, there is a large system of Orthodox schools, which do incorporate worship in their schedules.
>
> **Iran**, where although the government is an Islamic fundamentalist theocracy, there is no school prayer for children 15 or younger and participation in Muslim prayers is optional even for those older than 15.

Just two countries with mixed religious demographics—Great Britain and Sweden—have official state-sanctioned prayer policies, and neither of these enjoys religious diversity as great as the mix of faiths in the U.S. It is not inconsequential that one of these two nations, Great Britain, figures so prominently in the

early religious freedom struggle of the United States. While the Church of England no longer maintains as extreme a stranglehold on religious observance in Great Britain that it did in the time of Madison and Jefferson, Great Britain is a country that is both officially Christian and officially dominated by a single Christian sect.

While recent political history in England has influenced the situation there, the English system of imposing religion through public education exhibits clear ancestral ties to what the Bill of Rights was intended to act as a counter in 1791.

Employment of school prayer as a policy issue in furtherance of a conservative political agenda is not unique to the U.S. in recent history. The tensions over school prayer in Colombia and Ecuador have been described above.

Recently, Great Britain has also found itself in domestic political turmoil over school prayer as a result of neo-rightist ideology. In 1988, the conservative government of Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher instituted a series of changes in that country's Education Act of 1944. Although Great Britain is religiously diverse, the government's ties to the Church of England remain to this day extensive, providing even for the Prime Minister to approve all appointments as bishops in the church and for Parliament to approve changes of consequence in church law.[18] The English sovereign is required to declare at her/his coronation that she/he is a Protestant.[19]

By official policy, English publicly funded schools "must give appropriate emphasis to Christianity in view of the country's traditions, whilst taking account of the other main religions represented in Britain."[20]

The original Education Act of 1944 provided for English schoolchildren to engage in a daily "collective act of worship." Over time, however, some schools had tended to ignore the worship requirement and the mid- to late 1980s brought with it a growing conflict between political forces that wanted to reemphasize the traditional Protestant Christian tradition of England and those inclined to recognize the increasing racial and religious diversity of the United Kingdom. It was a situation in many ways closely parallel to the debate in the United States.

In Great Britain, in 1988, the Education Reform Act as proposed originally said little about religion. But in Parliament, conservative political forces eventually turned the debate into one over emphasis on Christianity in British schools and, more broadly, attempting to preserve the primacy of Protestant Christian theology in the face of growing demographic diversity throughout the UK.

> The stakes were raised when, during the committee stage in the House of Lords, Baroness Cox and others moved amendments to provide that religious education in all government maintained schools should be "predominantly Christian." The 1944 Act had never explicitly referred to Christianity and in light of the rapid increase in the number of schoolchildren of other faiths resulting from substantial post-1945 immigration from the New Commonwealth and Pakistan, this proposal might have seemed to some as rather perverse.[21]

The conservative politicians were in rebellion at alterations in the social fabric of Great Britain. According to these conservative proponents of mandatory Protestant Christian worship in schools, "religious education and collective worship had in many cases either become excessively secularized or else a multi-faith approach had been adopted, leading to trivialization through consumption of 'a fruit cocktail of world faiths.'"[22] Finally, the British conservatives were upset that "there had been insufficient recognition of Christianity as constituting 'the main spiritual tradition' of the country for nearly 2,000 years."[23]

Conclusion

The vast majority of the major countries of the world, including Western Europe, Central America and Asia have rejected state-sponsored prayer in their public school systems. Countries that have retained state-sponsored prayer are in the main far more racially and religiously homogenous than the United States; in Great Britain, even with official recognition of the Church of England as a quasi-state religion, the school prayer issue appears to have been most recently part of the national political debate as a smokescreen for more deep-seated concerns about growing racial and other diversity in a country where conservatives wish to cling to an irretrievably inaccurate stereotype of the nation as homogeneously a white Protestant nation.

Despite the aberration—historically significant to the United States, in particular—of Great Britain, the trendline around the world is toward greater insulation between public school systems and the practice of religion. In South Africa, President Nelson Mandela's government has abolished mandatory prayer and Bible classes. In Colombia, although it has encountered domestic resistance, the constitution has been changed to require separation of church and state. Mexico and Venezuela—both overwhelmingly Roman Catholic countries—have continued to honor constitutional guarantees of separation of church and state.

For advocates of religious faith, the record of the United States speaks for itself. America chose a very different approach to religion, with the Founders recognizing that, for religion to flourish here as they intended, the state would have to stay out of it. Other countries have not chosen this path, but still the vast majority of them have overwhelmingly endorsed the idea that the public schools should not attempt to become houses of worship or put the stamp of government approval on particular forms of worship. The only possible result—one that is the polar opposite of religious liberty—would be religious conformity with a governmentally controlled religion.

Notes

[1] *School District of Abington Township v. Schempp*, 374 US 203, 226 (1963).

[2] Letter from U.S. Rep. Ernest J. Istook, Jr., to Art Spitzer, executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union of the National Capital Area, Nov. 30, 1994.

[3] Istook letter, page 2.

[4] "Religion in the Public Schools: A Joint Statement of Current Law," April, 1995. This document represented an unprecedented consensus among organizations sometimes at opposite ends of the spectrum on school prayer issues.

The consensus document interpreting what the Constitution and relevant case law permit in terms of religious activity in schools was drafted by a committee that included the American Jewish Congress, American Civil Liberties Union, American Jewish Committee, American Muslim Council, Anti-Defamation League, Christian Legal Society, General Conference of Seventh Day Adventists, National Assn. of Evangelicals, National Council of Churches, People for the American Way and Union of American Hebrew Congregations.

Another 22 groups endorsed the report, ranging from the Church of Scientology and National Sikh Center to the United Church of Christ and Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. The drafting and endorsing committee member organizations agreed that current law does not stand in the way of children praying in school, as long as participation is neither required nor coerced and does not interfere with instruction and that schools are free to teach *about* religion, as long as they do not merely teach religion.

[5] Gebe Martinez and David G. Savage, "Christian Groups Craft 'Religious Equality' Amendment," Los Angeles Times, Wednesday, April 5, 1995, page A13.

Although news coverage of the issue in April, 1995, indicated that proponents of such an amendment had declined to disclose the exact nature of its wording, at least two newspapers, including the Los Angeles Times with this story, published what purported to be at least one potential version of the amendment. This wording read as follows:

"Section 1. Neither the United States nor any State shall abridge the freedom of any person or group, including students in public schools, to engage in prayer or other religious expression in circumstances in which expression of a non-religious character would be permitted; nor deny benefits to or otherwise discriminate against any person or group on account of the religious character of their speech, ideas, motivations or identity.

"Section 2. Nothing in the Constitution shall be construed to forbid the United States or any State to give public or ceremonial acknowledgment to the religious heritage, beliefs, or traditions of its people.

"Section 3. The exercise, by the people, of any freedoms under the First Amendment or under this Amendment shall not constitute an establishment of religion."

[6] "School Prayer Is Already Allowed," the New York Times, Sunday, The Week in Review editorial page, April 23, 1995.

[7] James Madison's "Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments," reproduced in *Everson v. Board of Education*, 330 US1, 64 (1947) (appendix).

[8] *ibid*, page 3.

[9] *St. Mark's Gospel*, 13:17. James Madison stated that it was an "aberration from the sacred principle of religious liberty [to] give to Caesar what belongs to God, or join together what God has put asunder...." James Madison on Religious Liberty 90 (R. Alley ed. 1985).

[10] 1 A. Stokes, Church and State in the United States 195 (1950).

[11] R. Williams, *A Letter of Mr. John Cottons*, (1643), quoted in L. Levy, The Establishment Clause 184 (1986).

[12] B. Franklin, Letter to Dr. Richard Price (Oct. 9, 1780) quoted in A. Stokes, *supra*.

[13] *Engel v. Vitale*, 370 US 421, 425, 428 (1962).

[14] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, 12th edition, 1848, the last published during the author's lifetime. Reprinted by Anchor Books, J.P. Mayer ed., 1969, pages 295, 298 and 299.

[15] Barry A. Kosmin and Seymour P. Lachman, *One Nation Under God: Religion in Contemporary American Society*, New York, Harmony Books, 1993, page 9.

[16] *ibid*, page 2.

[17] *ibid*, page 8.

[18] Sebastian Poulter, "The Religious Education Provisions of England's Education Reform Act 1988," Journal of Law and Education, Vol. 19 No. 4, Fall, 1990, page 502.

[19] *ibid*.

[20] United Kingdom Foreign & Commonwealth Office, "Education in Britain," extract provided by the British Consulate General, Los Angeles, Dec. 1, 1994.

[21] Poulter, page 502.

[22] *ibid*, page 503.

[23] *Ibid*.

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CORE QUESTION:

Does the country have daily, state-sanctioned prayer periods in its public schools in which students are expected to pray together, reciting a single prayer?

Algeria — NO

Prayer occurs at home or places other than school. There is no time during school when students pray together. In the younger grades, Islam is taught in school.

Argentina — NO

No prayer and no religious classes, even though the government officially supports the Roman Catholic church.

Australia — NO

Some Australian public schools occasionally include prayers in school assemblies. In some areas, religious instruction is offered in schools for children whose parents have authorized it in a specific faith. In the six states and two territories of Australia, "approved representatives" of denominations have a "right of entry" to schools for such parent-approved religious instruction. In any school where religious instruction is offered, parents may withdraw their students from any such classes. In recent years, the ministers of education at the national, state and territorial level have agreed curricula should be developed to enhance children's "capacity to exercise judgment in matters of morality, ethics and social justice."

Austria — NO

Public schools have one to two hours of religion classes–Catholic studies–each week in which, a government spokesperson said, "They pray and learn about Jesus." However, parents may withdraw their children from these classes.

Bahrain — NO

However, prayer is sanctioned at all levels of instruction, but especially encouraged–though not required–in grades six through 12. There is no single prayer recitation or period. Religious instruction is required. Only the Muslim faith is taught in any detail. However, since Islam recognizes Christianity and Judaism as revealed faiths, they are taught positively. Other than the three monotheistic religions, other creeds are not treated as true religions. The purpose of religious education is to teach children a single faith–Islam. School buildings and facilities are used freely to promote Islam, but not other faiths. Parents may withdraw their children from these classes, but the children still must pass a final exam in the material.

Belgium — NO

There is no prayer in the public schools, and classes teach ethics, as opposed to religion. But most children go to Catholic schools, which the government sponsors. No daily prayer period is observed in the Catholic schools, but Masses are said at various events.

Bolivia — NO

There is no prayer period, but since Catholicism is the state religion, it is taught in religion class. These classes are not mandatory, and students may elect to take philosophy instead, for example. A non-catholic political party in Bolivia is working to remove Catholicism as the official national religion and substitute separation of church and state.

Brazil — NO

No prayer or religious study in public schools.

Bulgaria — NO

Before World War II, there was prayer at the start of each day. Now, at the beginning of the school year a priest may say a liturgy to bless the coming year, but nothing more.

Cambodia — NO

No prayer in schools. The government was previously Communist. Now that Cambodia is a more democratic society, this may be reconsidered in the future, but no change is imminent.

Canada

Each Canadian province is empowered to establish its own prayer policy.

Nova Scotia — NO

There is no sanctioned prayer activity or prayer period. Some schools offer voluntary religious instruction. Such classes occur outside of the regular instructional day. Schools with religious instruction determine policy locally.

New Brunswick — NO

Non-sectarian, no prayer in schools.

Newfoundland — YES

Unlike other provinces, Newfoundland has denominational schools, including Roman Catholic and "Integrated" schools. Integrated schools are administered by a collective body of Protestant faiths that set policy collaboratively. There is morning prayer service and religious education, but neither is compulsory.

Ontario — NO

There is a non-denominational "inspirational" reading, followed by a minute's silence. The Lord's Prayer was said until two years ago. Public schools have a multi-faced approach to teaching about various religions. There are also state-sponsored "separate" schools, which are Roman Catholic.

Canada [continued]

Quebec — NO

Children either have religion classes (Catholic or Protestant) or a morals class. Quebec is predominantly Catholic and Protestant, and the schools reflect this. Schools are generally affiliated with one of these two. Parents–or the children themselves–may choose which class to attend.

Manitoba — NO

There is no prayer in the schools. There are no religious studies either. However, parents may petition to have religious studies for their children.

Alberta — Province did not respond to survey.

Saskatchewan — YES

The government allows up to 2 ½ hours of religious instruction per week. Prayer is also authorized for the classroom; the prayer must be the Lord's Prayer or a suitable Bible reading. There are also state-sanctioned Roman Catholic Separate schools.

British Colombia — NO

Prayer is explicitly prohibited.

Chile — NO

There is no prayer time. Religion classes are optional, taught on Saturdays.

Colombia — YES

There is prayer in schools-though church/state are supposedly separate. As of 1991, a new constitution was drafted requiring separation of church and state, as in the U.S. Due to its newness ("and inertia") prohibition of prayers in schools has not yet been implemented. The government is currently debating implementation. Presently, public schools in urban areas hold Mass for Catholic children once a week. Non-Catholic children may instead attend religious class of parent's choice. They are not required to attend Mass.

Costa Rica — NO

There is no prayer period. Participation in prayer activity is neither required nor sanctioned. The schools do offer voluntary religious instruction–Roman Catholic only.

Cuba — NO

There is no prayer in school in Cuba, nor is there religious instruction.

Denmark **NO**

There is no school prayer, but they do teach religion in the younger grades.

Ecuador **NO**

This may change, since the president is introducing a new policy in which religion will be taught in the public schools. At the moment, the schools are secular, but that is supposed to change. Late last year, the Minister of Education resigned rather than implement this new policy. The situation remains unclear.

Egypt **NO**

There is no specific prayer period or time, but there are mosques in all the schools so that the children are able to pray if they want to, according to their faith and their free time. There is required religious study for both Muslims and Christians, with training in the Koran and Bible respectively. These classes are not counted in students' credits.

El Salvador **NO**

There is no prayer in the public school system, nor are there religion classes.

Ethiopia **NO**

No religion in schools, at all, since 1965.

Finland **YES**

The day begins with a prayer or a reading. On religious holidays, there is always a prayer. Religion is taught as an overview of various religions, with attention paid to the history of the Lutheran church, to which 88 percent of Finns belong.

France **NO**

There is no school prayer or religious curriculum.

Germany **NO**

There is no school prayer. There is religious instruction (Protestant/Catholic) until age 14, when students may choose non-secular courses like ethics in place of the regular religion class.

Ghana **NO**

Children in the third grade may opt to take a test on Bible knowledge, but it is entirely voluntary, and it is not taught in the school.

Great Britain **YES**

All schools are required to hold daily collective worship. Religious education is compulsory and determined by local ad hoc committees. Parents have the right to withdraw their children from services and classes.

Greece — YES

There is collective prayer each morning. In addition, children are instructed about the Greek Orthodox religion.

Guatemala — NO

There are catechism classes, but there are no prayer services.

Honduras — NO

There is no school prayer. Religion is not taught at school; it is left to the students and their families.

Hong Kong — NO

There are no prayers or services of any kind.

Hungary — NO

There is no prayer in public schools. Religion is taught as an extra curricular activity, after school.

Iceland — NO

There is no government authorized prayer time. The population is 95 percent Lutheran so there is little controversy. Religious instruction is offered in the middle school years. It is probably voluntary, but the question of parents withdrawing their children doesn't come up. It is a general course on religion but the framework is basically Protestant Christian.

India — No unified national policy

Government has no control over religious practices in schools. It does not impose or monitor such issues. Some schools have daily prayers, others do not but these matters are under control of school principals. The community has no say in the matter, either.

Iran — NO

For children under 15, there are no prayers in school. For those over 15, there is a separate room where daily Muslim prayers are held each day at noon. No one is required to attend, even though Iran's government is an Islamic republic theocracy.

Iraq — NO

There are no prayers in school. The religion-flavored national anthem (music only) is played every Friday morning.

Israel — NO

There is no prayer in public schools, although in Israel, there are non-orthodox as well as orthodox schools with non-orthodox schools most closely fitting the definition of public schools in the United States. Israel's population is 82 percent Jewish.

Italy — NO

There is no school prayer, but there is one hour of religion instruction each week. If they are not Catholic, students can opt out of class for that hour and the hour of instruction is often scheduled at the beginning or the end of the school day to facilitate this. The consulate stressed that, in Italy, religion is the way of life and that these classes are part of a social education.

Japan — NO

There is no school prayer or religious classes.

Jordan — NO

There is no prayer in school, but they do teach religion to the students. This consists primarily of Islam, but they touch briefly on other religions as well.

Kuwait — NO

Students study Islam at school, but there is no scheduled, school-wide prayer period.

Lebanon — NO

There is no prayer period in public schools. Prayer is sanctioned but not encouraged. In private schools--most schools are private or parochial--prayers are usually mandatory. Religious instruction is required. If children (through their parents) choose not to attend the classes, they still must pass an exam. Religious education is strictly multi-faith, albeit restricted to Islam, Christianity and Judaism. The purpose is to expose students to the role of religion in society. Teaching a particular faith is left to private or parochial schools, which vastly outnumber public schools in Lebanon. In localities where no such schools exist for all sects, it is quite common for members of any faith to use public school buildings.

Libya — YES

Religious study and practice is a central aspect of the schools. Islam is a required part of the curriculum. Foreigners are not required to attend these classes, but almost all foreigners attend private schools.

Luxembourg — NO

There is no prayer time, but there are compulsory Catholic studies for all Catholics. Luxembourg is 99 percent Catholic. Non-Catholics may opt out.

Mexico — NO

There is no prayer in school. It was outlawed after the revolution, when the state became secular. Since 1983, when the constitution was revised, the church has played a more active role in school policy making, but schools still do not have prayer.

Morocco — NO

However, in this heavily Islamic country children are encouraged to pray at some time during the day. Children study the Koran from first through sixth grade.

Mozambique **NO**

There is no prayer or religious instruction in the public schools.

Nepal **YES**

Schools begin every day with a song/prayer celebrating the Hindu Goddess of Wisdom. Hindu, Buddhist and Christian children all hold hands and sing together. In January each year, schools have more elaborate ceremonies.

Netherlands **NO**

There is no school prayer, public schools have no religious emphasis.

New Zealand **NO**

Most public schools do not have prayer or religious instruction. The school policy is determined by the local school board, composed of parents. It is possible that the board would determine that religious studies or prayer were necessary, but most schools do not.

Nicaragua **NO**

There is no prayer and no study of religion in public schools.

Norway **NO**

Norway does not have organized daily prayer but hours are set aside for religious studies (Lutheran). Church and state are not separated.

Oman **NO**

Islamic religious studies are part of the core curriculum, but there are privately-financed schools for those who do not wish their children to be so instructed.

Pakistan **YES**

They have compulsory prayer. Prayer is held in the morning to start the school day. It is a single prayer-a recitation from the Holy Quran. [Pakistan is a predominantly Muslim society.] Prayer is compulsory for all students. Religious studies [Islamic studies] are compulsory; a part of the curriculum. Religious instructions are tailored to Islam also, non-Muslims take Civics instead.

Paraguay **NO**

There is no prayer in public schools. The church takes care of the religious instruction of its flock itself.

Philippines — NO

Public schools are secular. As in the United States, one can receive religious instruction from the institutions themselves. However, there are a great many private religious schools in the country that do have mandatory prayer periods.

Poland — NO

There is a general split between church and state in Poland. Students might be taught an overview of religions or the church's history.

Portugal — NO

There used to be school prayer when the country was ruled by a dictatorship, but now there is no compulsory education, although there is some influence from Catholicism.

Romania — YES

In the schools there are one or two hours of non-compulsory religion, led by an orthodox-Christian priest. They do have collective worship during this period-and it is during the school day. In some areas of Romania, other religious groups may use the facilities, but this occurs outside of the school day.

Singapore — NO

There are no student prayer activities in government schools in Singapore and prayer is voluntary, conducted outside school hours, even in church-affiliated schools there. As part of a broad civics and moral education program, Singapore public schools teach "values underlying the practices of our multi-religious and multi-cultural society" and such courses emphasize "respect and appreciation" for the beliefs and practices of the different religions represented in Singapore. Students may take elective courses, outside regular school hours, in their choice of Bible studies, Buddhist studies, Confucian ethics, Hindu studies, Islamic studies and Sikh studies.

Saudi Arabia — YES

All but one percent of the population is Muslim. There are compulsory "Islamic classes" and noontime prayer. Rooms are set aside as prayer rooms with teachers as leaders; Islam is the state religion.

South Africa — NO

Before the new government, there was compulsory religion for everyone for 30 minutes each morning-in the religion of the pupil's faith. That has been swept away under President Nelson Mandela's democratically elected government. Today there is no prayer and no compulsory Bible class.

South Korea — NO

There is no prayer in public schools, and religious education is limited to private schools.

Spain **NO**

There is no school prayer and religion classes are optional; for example, one could choose a class on ethics in place of the religion class.

Sudan **NO**

However, there are religious classes (choice of Christian or Muslim), and there are teachers who encourage prayer and teach Muslim practices. Prayer is highly encouraged, and "always preferable" but students are not required to participate.

Sweden **YES**

The day starts with a prayer or poem or some inspirational reading. If there is prayer, the selection would have to include faiths other than just the Christian ones. They have a multi-faith approach to religion class.

Switzerland **NO**

There are encouraged religious services and classes; Protestant and Catholic. Services and classes are not required.

Syria **NO**

In this Islamic culture, most students are required to pray five times each day. These times may or may not coincide with the school day. The students are taught Islamic culture in their classes.

Thailand **YES**

Everyone goes to a weekly Buddhist prayer. It is not an optional service; all of the students must learn Buddhism as part of Thailand's way of life. Thailand is 90 percent Buddhist.

Turkey **NO**

Turkey is a secular country.. They have no praying moment. They do not teach religion in the public schools, unless one goes to a vocational school to study religion/theology. They have an ethics/morals class in high school for one year. Turkey is 99 percent Muslim.

Ukraine **NO**

Religion is not taught in the schools. New, private schools may teach religion, but not state schools.

United Arab Emerites **NO**

The UAE's interpretation if Islam is that true prayer can only be engaged in by children once they are about 15 years old, and this is always in a mosque, not at school. In high school there are designated blocks of time devoted to non-compulsory, non-segregated prayer time. They have single faith Islamic classes, beginning in first grade. As the students get older, the classes become more concerned with how to practice Islam.

Uruguay — NO

Responded that its schools are "atheistic."

Venezuela — NO

The church and state have been separated for a long time, perhaps longer than in any other Latin American country. There is no law mandating religious studies for the students. Where religious studies are offered, they are electives.

Survey Totals

Number of countries surveyed: 72

Countries with unified national school prayer policies: 70

Number of Canadian provinces surveyed: 8

Canadian provinces with state-sanctioned school prayer: 2

Countries that permit state-sanctioned school prayer: 11

Countries with state-sanctioned prayer that are religiously homogeneous or nearly homogeneous or that have official state religions: 8

Countries that have banned mandatory prayer, but encountered political resistance: ..... 1 (Colombia)

Countries with state-sanctioned school prayer that have dominantly Western, multi-faith societies in some ways comparable to the United States: ..... 2 (Great Britain and Sweden)

Information in this table was supplied by either the Washington embassies, Los Angeles consulates or New York United Nations missions of the countries surveyed. Several embassies and consulates referred these questions to their government ministries prior to responding. These data reflect the official government policy on school prayer in these nations; as in the United States, there may be local deviation–perhaps in conflict with prevailing legal doctrine–from these national policies. No attempt has been made to assess local deviations from national policy in any country surveyed.

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